

Arizona and New Mexico Railway Passenger Station  
Clifton Townsite  
Coronado Boulevard  
Clifton  
Greenlee County  
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-180

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6-CLIFT,  
34-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**

**ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO RAILWAY PASSENGER STATION**

**HABS No. AZ-180**

**Location:**

Clifton Townsite, Coronado Boulevard, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

**Significance:**

Associated with transportation and the Arizona and New Mexico Railway, and the commercial development of Clifton.

**Description:**

The Arizona and New Mexico Railway Station is located within the canyon of the San Francisco River in Clifton. The building is wedged between Coronado Boulevard (Arizona Highway 666) and the old track alignment of the A & NM railroad, which is now a switchyard for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Just beyond the railroad tracks (to the northeast) is a slag flood wall and the San Francisco River below.

The Station is a two-story brick masonry structure. The building's footprint measures just under 122 feet by 32 feet at the first floor, with the long dimension oriented parallel to the railroad tracks and the San Francisco River. The second floor is not as long as the first floor, and is centered to form balustraded roof decks at each end of the building.

The building's dominant features include its broad, hipped Spanish tile roofs supported on gently curving cantilevered brackets sprung from supporting masonry pilasters and walls. The walls themselves are executed in two colors of brick; a tan brick body is supported by a red-brown brick wainscot. Plenty of double-hung one-over-one patterned wood windows are provided, with strongly emphasized horizontals in the plaster lintels, sills, and horizontal mullions.

Two separate roofs enclose the station. The upper one, a hipped roof with a gablet dormer at each end, is built atop the enclosed space of the second floor. Flat roofing covers the roof decks at each end. The lower roof projects out from the exterior wall around the perimeter of the lower story to shelter the concrete platform.

Inside, the first floor is broken into four general areas: the restrooms, the general waiting room, the baggage room, and the express room. Relative to the utilitarian areas, the general waiting room and the restrooms are ornate. The interior details and finishes are carefully treated. The walls are of exposed brick, in the same two-tone scheme as the exterior. The tops of the walls are detailed with corbels and dentils executed in red brick. The ceilings are pressed metal, and the floors are exposed concrete, carefully scored into squares. Elsewhere, floors and walls are simpler, lacking the ornament and detail of the public rooms. Typical surfaces include painted concrete brick walls, plaster ceilings, and exposed, flat concrete floors.

A stairway leads to the second floor from the general waiting room. The second floor was originally

used as office space and was divided into seven rooms plus an access hall.

Although the exterior has escaped major changes, the interior layout is considerably altered as a result of a conversion to restaurant use in 1939. Most of the original partitions in the second floor have been removed. A restoration in 1993 resulted also in updating of the restrooms and the installation of a second exit stair from the second floor.

#### History:

The need for transportation is a constant theme in Clifton history. Copper had to reach its markets, and men and materials had to get to the mines and smelters. The success of the mining ventures in the Clifton area depended on adequate transportation, whether it be by mules and oxen, the baby gauge railroad, the narrow gauge railroad, or the standard gauge line which arrived in 1901. Each were faced different transportation challenges. It is somewhat ironic that the crown jewel of the railroad transportation system, the Arizona and New Mexico Railway Passenger Depot, which was designed to meet the transportation needs of a community of 20,000 souls proved to be more building than Clifton needed and was under-utilized for much of the historic period.

The Arizona and New Mexico Railway (A&NM) got its start in 1883 as a narrow gauge railroad from Clifton to Lordsburg, New Mexico where it connected with the Southern Pacific main line. It was formed from the merger of the Clifton and Lordsburg Railway Company of New Mexico and the Clifton and Southern Pacific Railway of Arizona. The A&NM was incorporated on August 1, 1883. All of these corporations were the creation of the Arizona Copper Company which acquired mining properties in Clifton.<sup>1</sup>

The A.C. Co. and the A&NM went through many tough times, but by the turn of the century both had emerged as profitable enterprises. In 1901 the A&NM converted to standard gauge track. The parent company and the railway located the hub of their operations on Clifton's west side, along a ledge above the San Francisco River. Here the A.C. Co. built houses for its managers and engineers, and the A&NM had its warehouse, depot, turntable, and private car barn for the A.C. Co. car "Arizona."<sup>2</sup>

In 1912, buoyed by a decade of high copper prices and heavy profits, the A.C. Co. embarked on a massive improvement campaign. A group of A.C. Co. directors toured Clifton in 1911, making plans for a new smelter and other improvements. The Company broke ground on the new smelter in January of 1912 and by the middle of the summer 400 men were employed on the project. In October the Company announced that it would build a new passenger depot and a new freight depot for the A&NM on Clifton's west side. This project necessitated the removal of the Company residences near the tracks so in February of 1913 the A.C. Co. unveiled plans to build a new group of residences on Clifton's east side.<sup>3</sup>

By May of 1913, the Company had completed the freight depot and started work on the passenger depot. Contractors Mayfield and Shaw completed the foundation in June and soon began placing bricks. In September, workers connected the new freight and passenger depots with the boiler room of the ice plant with a pipeline that provided steam heat for both buildings. Mayfield and Shaw estimated that the passenger depot would be completed by the first week of October. They were not far off. On October 17 a group of A.C. Co. directors arrived for the opening ceremony of the depot. On October 21, the directors officially opened the depot, giving Clifton a certain "metropolitan air" and ushering a new era in transportation.<sup>4</sup>

Although Clifton may have been ready for a new era of prosperity, it lasted only a short time. World War One raised copper prices for a time, but the end of hostilities brought a severe drop in the copper market. In April of 1921, special trains left the depot carrying between 1,700 and 1,800 Mexican workers, women, and children as the A.C. Co. laid off employees. In May, A.C. Co. President Norman Carmichael announced that the Company would cease operations in Clifton and Morenci on June 1. In October, Phelps Dodge acquired the A.C. Co. and along with it the A&NM Ry. Phelps Dodge promptly sold the A&NM Ry to the El Paso and Southwestern. After January 1, 1922, the A&NM was now simply the Clifton Branch of the EP&SW.<sup>5</sup>

The remainder of the depot's history is one of slow decline marked by bursts of activity. In 1925, the Southern Pacific acquired the EP&SW and with it the Clifton properties. Copper prices turned up during the second half of the twenties, but the depression of the 1930s hit Clifton hard. In 1932 Phelps Dodge announced the temporary shut down of the mines, mill, and smelter in Clifton. Phelps Dodge made special arrangements with the Southern Pacific for a train to take Mexican workers to Juarez, where the cars would be attached to trains of the National Railways of Mexico. On Friday, July 22, over 400 Mexican workers and their families left Clifton from the depot. Forty Red Cross ladies made over 2,400 sandwiches for the travelers. In August, a special car left the depot with seventy-nine Anglo former employees, bound for Los Angeles.<sup>6</sup>

Toward the end of the thirties, the economy picked up once again as Phelps Dodge began preparing to develop its open pit mine at Morenci and begin mining the huge "clay ore body." War clouds gathered on the horizon in Europe and the population of Clifton and Morenci increased as workers began to arrive. In the fall of 1939, Frank Martin announced plans to lease the depot for his Coronado Inn restaurant and bar. Martin opened in the old depot on November 1, 1939, after making many changes in the building. The combination of the restaurant and the passenger depot proved profitable, and the second floor of the building saw use as a meeting hall for civic and club groups. But over time, transportation changed again. People now traveled in private automobiles rather than trains. Passenger service to Clifton ended in 1967. The Coronado Inn continued, under a series of managers, until it too succumbed to changing times. Before the flood of 1983, the depot had been boarded shut.<sup>7</sup>

#### Sources:

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2. Myrick, Railroads of Arizona Volume 3, pp. 100-106; Arizona Copper Company 1908 base map.
3. Copper Era June 2, 1911 (I, 1: 5); January 19, 1912 (I, 1: 1); June 28, 1912 (I, 3: 4); October 25, 1912 (I, 1: 1); February 14, 1913 (I, 1: 6).
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5. Copper Era April 6, 1921 (I, 1: 3-4); April 15, 1921 (I, 1: 6); May 13, 1921 (I, 1: 5-6); October 7, 1921 (I, 1: 4-6); December 30, 1921 (I, 1: 6).
6. Copper Era June 13, 1924 (I, 1: 1-2); June 25, 1932 (I, 1: 6); July 9, 1932 (I, 1: 5); July 23, 1932 (I, 1: 6); August 6, 1932 (I, 1: 2).
7. Ryden Architects, A Historic Building Analysis of the Arizona and New Mexico Railway Passenger Station, Clifton, Arizona (Phoenix: Don W. Ryden, 1990), pp. 17-19.

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